

PEOPLE were at great strife with the children of Ammon ; and when *I* called you, ye delivered *me* not out of their hands. And when *I* saw that ye delivered *me* not, *I* put *my* life in *my* hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and Jehovah delivered them into *my* hand : wherefore then are ye come up unto *me* this day, to fight against *me* ? ” (vs. 2, 3). Jephthah talked of himself, thought about his disputed worth, fell into the snare that Satan had set for him and formed a party, when just before, having identified himself with the people, he had proclaimed their unity in the presence of the children of Ammon (chap. xi. 12, 23, 27). But now, “ my people ” meant Gilead as opposed to Ephraim.

Words intensified the quarrel. “ The men of Gilead smote Ephraim, *because they said*, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites ” (ver. 4). There was not a single principle involved in this struggle. On all sides it was but jealousy, personal importance and angry words exchanged by irritated hearts ; and so a fratricidal war broke out in the midst of Israel, brought about by their own hand. At the passages of Jordan they are known, for the purpose of killing one another, by a Shibboleth, a formula used for the name of Jehovah, and which had nothing to do with the truth of God. And there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

Let us be on our guard against such snares, for